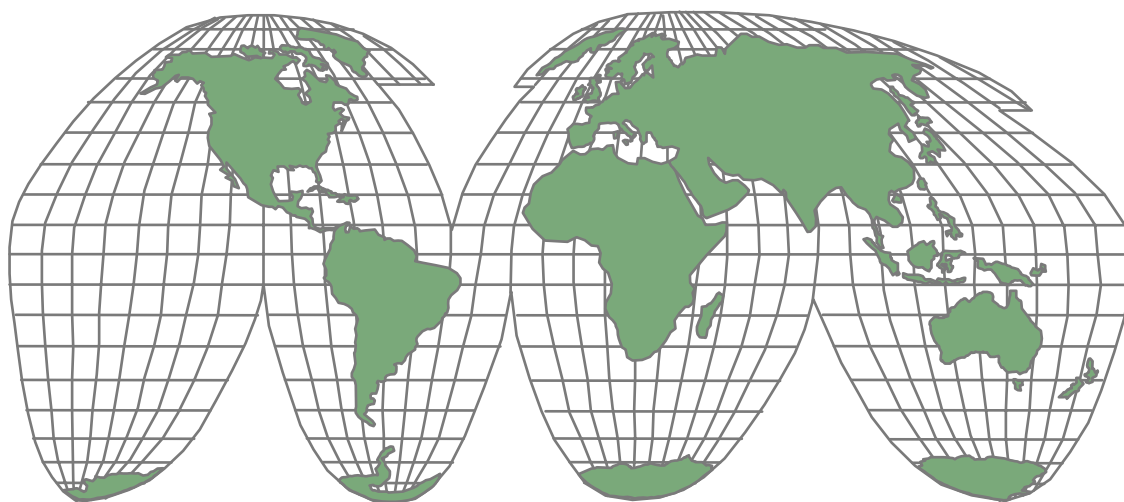


International Activities Report



2003

Prepared by the International Relations Office



February 2004

Acknowledgment

The International Relations Office (IRO) would like to express grateful appreciation to all those who helped make this report possible. Individuals from each of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) districts, divisions and offices described herein reviewed and updated their respective sections, providing invaluable data.

Many people took additional time to review other sections of the report and provided IRO with information to ensure that the descriptions of the various organizations, research projects, documents are as accurate as possible. We wish to express our appreciation for their efforts and contributions.

February 2004

2003 Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
International Activities Report
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Executive Summary

The Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) international activities are detailed in this report. TxDOT's involvement in international activities has dramatically increased in recent years due to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has accelerated and expanded the range and number of TxDOT's binational and multinational connections. The prospect of increased communication and growing relationships with Mexico in particular, continues to be strong. While much of the agency's international activity concerns Mexico, TxDOT also interacts with other nations. Since 1994, approximately 1,450 engineers and technicians from 40 countries, including Mexico, have visited TxDOT.

Planning for NAFTA, TxDOT created the International Relations Office (IRO). The IRO provides support to bolster TxDOT's contribution to improving transportation infrastructure in other countries. The exchange of information is carried out by facilitating and exchanging visits from foreign professionals to TxDOT. Additionally, the Office provides support and advice to TxDOT district offices and divisions, and to other governmental entities, such as the Governor's Office and the Office of the Secretary of State. The IRO serves as TxDOT's representative on a number of international committees and is responsible for compiling data and producing reports related to TxDOT's international activities. Although the IRO has been a primary point of contact in international activities, many successful projects have been accomplished by TxDOT divisions, offices and districts, particularly those along the border. TxDOT remains committed to supporting Texas-Mexican trade and the transportation-related needs of the state.

The Pharr, Laredo and El Paso districts have a long history of cooperation with transportation officials in neighboring Mexican states. All three districts have made extensive efforts to work closely and develop productive working relationships with their Mexican neighbors. A shared goal is an ongoing planning and programming process. The three border district engineers (DEs) and other division directors are involved in many border-related projects. Some examples include the El Paso District working with the University of Chihuahua in developing a Technology Transfer Center at the university, and the Laredo District hosting a binational Value Engineering (VE) exercise for the second international bridge in Eagle Pass. The Pharr District, along with the Design Division, has taken the lead in participating in and developing Value Engineering efforts border-wide, including an important Value Engineering study in the Sierra Madre Mountains. In addition, engineers from the border districts have taught and facilitated engineering presentations at several Mexican universities, including the Mexican Transportation Institute (Instituto Mexicano de Transporte - IMT) and at the University of Ciudad Juarez (Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juarez) on Retaining Walls and Bridges.

Many of TxDOT's divisions and offices are involved in international activities. For example, the Construction Division (CST) provides technical support for the Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee (LTSS) Working Group 2 on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions. The Design Division (DES) provides staff support for the Border Technology Exchange Program (BTEP). DES has the border-wide lead in bringing together TxDOT and Mexican engineers through Value Engineering.

The Motor Carrier Division (MCD) assists in the development of administrative rules and the procedures for border port authorities to issue oversize/overweight permits. The MCD participates in the state's Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) program. The CVISN program involves the sharing of information between motor carriers, including Mexico-based carriers, The State Comptrollers Office, The Texas Department of Public Safety, and the Department of Transportation. The Traffic Operations Division (TRF) manages this program.

The Research and Technology Implementation Office (RTI) administers the federal Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP). Through this program, university professors from Texas have given transportation-engineering courses at universities in other countries.

The Transportation Planning and Programming Division (TPP) serves as the point of contact and is the lead for the Texas international bridge approval process. TPP developed the Texas Transportation Plan containing policies related to the Texas-Mexico border area and is overseeing an update of the plan.

The Travel Division (TRV) is involved in international communications and activities through the travel information and literature it publishes and distributes and through its litter prevention programs. Travel literature is mailed throughout the world, with approximately 31,971 packets mailed to international destinations during the 2003 calendar year.

The Vehicle Titles and Registration Division (VTR) has addressed border area registration and insurance issues by developing pertinent policies and procedures and by identifying the need for statutory guidance in specific areas. Particularly significant is the partnering of VTR with the Motor Carrier Division (MCD) and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to educate Mexican counterparts and the private sector on Texas' legal commercial vehicle operational requirements. Additionally, the VTR has been actively involved with the International Registration Plan, in an effort to solve the problems Mexico faces related to international registration of its trucks.

The Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA), which is a part of VTR, is actively involved in efforts to reduce the number of vehicles that are stolen and transported across both sides of the border.

Structure of Report: This report is divided into three major sections and documents the international activities in which TxDOT participates on a regular basis. The first section highlights activities by TxDOT entity. The next section contains more detailed descriptions of the activities noted in part one. The third section lists reference documents and other publications related to TxDOT's international involvement.

Information for this report was compiled from numerous sources. The IRO contributed data for the activities in which it participates directly. The various divisions, districts and offices mentioned in this report were consulted to update their respective sections. When data was directly available from the organization described (i.e., Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee) such documentation was also used. The United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and the U.S. State Department also contributed information contained in this report. Additional information on most of the activities included in this report can be obtained from TxDOT's International Relations Office at (512) 374-5345 or by fax at (512) 374-5325. This report may also be found in Spanish and English at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/>.

SECTION I
ACTIVITY SUMMARIES BY TxDOT ENTITY

International Relations Office (IRO)

The IRO coordinates functions, operations and information relating to international activities for TxDOT. The long-term objective of these activities is to improve international coordination of:

- Texas-Mexico border transportation infrastructure planning and programming.
- Cross-border technical exchange with Mexican Border States and the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT) to improve the safe and efficient flow of traffic across the Rio Grande border.
- Commercial motor carrier laws, rules and regulations
- International exchange of transportation related information and expertise.

The Director's and the office's major responsibilities include:

- Serving as the TxDOT contact on international relations activities for the Governor's Office, the Secretary of State's Office, legislative officials, other governmental entities (foreign, federal and state), FHWA, businesses, interest groups and the public.
- Representing and serving as liaison for TxDOT at the international, national and state levels. For example, IRO staff are involved with the U.S.-Mexico Binational Joint Working Committee, the U.S.-Mexico Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group, the Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee, the Border Governors' Conference, Border Technology Exchange Program, Technology Transfer Center Steering Committees and other similar forums.
- Representing TxDOT before the Commission, the Legislature and its committees, other agencies and the public on matters regarding international relations.
- Representing TxDOT on the Texas-Mexico Commerce and International Relations Initiative Unit. The Initiative Unit was formed to study the trade relations between the state of Texas, Mexico and the U.S. states that border Texas; develop and adopt the Texas-Mexico Commerce and International Relations Coordinated Plan; develop short and long-term recommendations and initiatives for each agency to follow; provide recommendations on how the state can increase and improve trade with Mexico and the other bordering U.S. states; and address any important trade problems between Texas and Mexico.
- Responding to inquiries from other nations, providing referral and resource information as appropriate.
- Reviewing and providing recommendations to the TxDOT administration on proposed legislation, rules, policies, procedures and actions regarding international issues.

- Assisting TxDOT administration, districts, divisions and offices in developing, implementing, coordinating and monitoring strategic and operational plans for international activities, especially those that cross geographic and functional areas.
- Facilitating, as necessary, contacts and programs between TxDOT and its counterparts in Mexico at the state and federal levels.
- Supporting the implementation of international/border-related elements of the Texas Transportation Plan, especially regarding border safety and efficiency.
- Coordinating meetings between TxDOT and Mexican officials regarding the Trans Texas Corridor. More information on the corridor can be found at www.dot.state.tx.us/ttc/ttc_home.htm
- Coordinating the Border Technology Exchange Program.
- Providing analysis and information related to legislative changes in international transportation issues.
- Serving on TxDOT's Research Management Committee 2 (Transportation Planning) as the lead for research studies related to NAFTA and the Texas-Mexico border.
- Providing translation services for Divisions and Offices (English to Spanish and vice versa).

In support of these responsibilities, the office publishes the following reports that provide more detail on the above activities:

- the *LTSS Quarterly Report*;
- the *Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings: Existing and Proposed*; and,
- the *International Activities Report*.

Border Safety Inspection Stations

Texas Senate Bill 913, 76th Legislature (1999), directed TxDOT to select locations for border safety inspection facilities along major highways at or near border crossings with Mexico in Brownsville, Laredo and El Paso allowing all federal, state and municipal agencies that regulate the passage of persons and vehicles crossing the border at those specific crossings to be located in one place. Additionally, if the federal agencies regulating of the passage of persons or vehicles at the specific crossing agreed to the inspection facility design and committed to using the facility at the designated location if built, such facilities would be established and maintained

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and TxDOT were responsible for site selection and possible acquisition of right-of-way for the Border Safety Inspection Facilities (BSIFs) and weigh stations near the existing federal inspection stations. The specific locations were considered the eight highest commercial traffic crossings along the Texas-Mexico border.

There are currently eight permanent border safety inspection facilities under development located at: the Bridge of the Americas and Zaragoza-Ysleta in El Paso; World Trade Bridge and Colombia-Solidarity Bridge in Laredo; Camino Real International in Eagle Pass; Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge in Pharr; Veterans International Bridge at Los Tomates and Free Trade Bridge at Los Indios in Brownsville. Each will provide an efficient method of inspecting and weighing commercial vehicles entering the United States at the Texas-Mexico border. Construction of the permanent BSIFs is pending completion of the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) process.

A "prototype facility" was developed to adapt to all eight locations and site selection studies and environmental assessments were completed for each location. A preferred site has been selected at six of the eight locations and public hearings have been held. The two exceptions are Zaragoza/Ysleta and Camino Real International. Additional sites are being evaluated at both of these locations.

Pending the design and construction of permanent BSIFs, temporary border safety inspection facilities are currently operational at the eight ports of entry along the Texas-Mexico border for the purpose of inspecting and weighing trucks.

Border Technology Exchange Program (BTEP)

On April 29, 1994, the U.S. and Mexican Secretaries of Transportation signed a Memorandum of Understanding that recognized the desire of both countries to improve the coordination and quality of land transportation systems in the border region, especially considering the increase in traffic due to NAFTA. The U.S.-Mexico Joint Working Committee (JWC) was created as a result of this first MOU, and the Border Technology Exchange Program (BTEP), under the auspices of the JWC became the means by which the two countries could carry out their coordinating efforts. The program is funded by grant-type monies from the Federal Highway Administration and in-kind contributions from the U.S. and Mexican border states, as well as the Mexican Ministry of Communications and Transportation (SCT).

Texas works closely with its Mexican border state counterparts to exchange infrastructure planning information, to identify each state's technical needs and to establish positive, open communications. In an effort to further the exchange of information, Technology Transfer Centers (T²) have been established in Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas and Coahuila. Training courses and activities such as official visits, planning meetings, technical exchanges, and conferences and workshops on transportation-related topics have been carried out.

Entities participating in BTEP include: TxDOT; the Federal Highway Administration; the DOTs of California, Arizona and New Mexico; the Mexican Transportation Institute; the Mexican Ministry of Communications and Transportation; the Mexican states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas; Mexican institutions of education; and U.S. and Mexican publicly- and privately-employed engineers.

Participating TxDOT divisions and districts include the Transportation Planning and Programming Division, Bridge, Maintenance, Design and Construction Divisions, and the Laredo, El Paso and Pharr districts.

To coordinate the work of the numerous TxDOT districts, divisions and offices active in the program, the International Relations Office develops annual statewide plans compatible with the BTEP border-wide strategic plan agreed upon by all U.S.-Mexico participating federal and state entities. Statewide plans call for the sponsorship and coordination of a third PROVIAL (maintenance conference), and a range of other technical and informational exchanges and official visits. In addition to the BTEP statewide plan, each border district generated a BTEP plan of its own (coordinated with the IRO plan and their respective Mexican border state counterparts) highlighting exchange opportunities in their respective areas, which was implemented in 2003. Through this program, Texas has sponsored numerous activities involving transportation engineers from the U.S. and Mexico.

In supporting a wide range of activities, the Texas BTEP promotes five central objectives:

- Improving safe and efficient transborder transportation systems in the border region.
- Sharing planning information, standards and specifications.
- Enhancing professional and technical capabilities.
- Increasing institutional, technical and legal compatibility and understanding.
- Institutionalizing the technology exchange process.

BTEP is also an excellent forum to further develop working relationships with the four Mexican states that border Texas, as well as with other U.S. and Mexican transportation stakeholders. Working closely with Mexico and sharing transportation priorities will ensure the best use of funds in the border region and contribute to the safe and efficient transport of people and goods throughout the border area.

International Visitors

Since 1994, TxDOT has hosted approximately 1,450 visitors from 40 countries including, amongst others, Algeria, Australia, Belarus, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Egypt, England, Finland, France, Ghana, Hungary, India, Italy, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Guinea, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Venezuela.

While the IRO coordinates the planning for TxDOT's international visitors, assuring correct contacts are made, culture is considered and protocols are followed. Many visitors also contact the IRO directly to request specific information for meetings or visits to particular offices or individuals. The IRO organizes these visits by arranging appointments and escorting the officials when necessary. The visits generally last one to two days.

In addition to these short visits, the department has also received some international visitors for longer periods. Some transportation officials, who participate in an international program affiliated with the University of Texas at Austin and TxDOT, have hosted visitors for periods up to a month.

The opportunity to share transportation related techniques and methods is invaluable. These visits afford TxDOT employees the opportunity to learn first-hand about transportation agencies in other nations. Likewise, the information and technology that is shared during these visits contributes to those countries' transportation systems. This exchange of information is especially important as pertains to Mexico given the size of the border with Texas and the amount of commerce and tourism between the two countries.

Finally, the IRO office receives and responds to numerous inquiries from groups and individuals seeking information about licensing, insurance, titling and research issues.

Other District/Division/Office Activities

The Pharr, Laredo and El Paso districts have histories of cooperation with transportation officials in the neighboring Mexican states. All three districts have made extensive efforts to develop close productive working relationships with their Mexican neighbors. Their goal is to develop a collaborative planning and programming process that will enhance collaborative planning along the border.

El Paso (ELP)

The district is in the construction phase of implementing traffic counters at all international crossings. Additionally they are installing cameras along LP 375 (Cesar Chavez Highway) that will link to the city of El Paso's Traffic Management Center.

The District is currently in the preliminary design stage of the development of the Border Safety Inspection Facilities (BSIF) at the Bridge of the Americas (BOTA) and Zaragoza Port of Entry.

The city of El Paso was selected as one of the Texas sites to test innovative Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) intended to make border crossings more efficient. While interest in this project remains high, it is currently on hold.

The El Paso District is also involved in various transportation related task forces and research studies dealing with issues such as traffic control, communication and environmental impacts on the border. The district is actively involved with the local Metropolitan Planning Office (MPO) in planning for transportation improvements in the area. A new initiative has been undertaken this year: the Camino Real Corridor- Border Improvement Plan Study (BIP). This project is being carried out by the MPO and will assist in determining the feasibility of new international ports of entry and their effect on air quality

In addition, the district exchanges information and technology by means of the Technology Transfer Center (T²) in its neighboring border state of Chihuahua. The district sponsored several visits by students involved in a master's degree program in transportation from the University of Chihuahua. The district provides staff support on Value Engineering/Value Analysis for BTEP.

The district engineer is an ex-officio member of the International Planning and Transportation Committee, which serves the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez area. The committee's purpose is to facilitate information exchange, participate in joint research projects and other activities that benefit the region. This is the first international planning organization for neighboring Texas-Mexico cities.

Laredo (LRD)

The Laredo district engineer provides updates to TxDOT as well as to officials from the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Coahuila on projects in the Laredo District. District staff members have attended several planners' meetings held between Tamaulipas, Coahuila and Nuevo León in an effort to share information on planning operations.

As part of the technology exchange process with Texas' Mexican counterparts, the Laredo District supported workshops, tours and visits with Nuevo León, Coahuila and Tamaulipas. In addition, the district provided technical support to Coahuila's Director of Roads for a project in Piedras Negras.

The second international bridge in Eagle Pass (Camino Real International Bridge, opened in September 1999) provided a forum for a Value Engineering exercise that resulted in substantial savings for TxDOT in terms of the infrastructure to the bridge. Laredo District engineers joined their counterparts in Coahuila and others in significantly improving the bridge structure. Laredo District engineers have also participated in Value Engineering activities in Tamaulipas (see Pharr).

Future opportunities for technology exchange have been developed at the World Trade Bridge. As presented in the district-wide BTEP plan, these include binational study opportunities on work involving hydraulic pavement, bridge and lighting construction, landscaping, signage, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), earthwork and drainage structures.

Pharr (PHR)

The Pharr District has been actively involved in the Border Technology Exchange Program. The district has sponsored workshops, tours and visits of Mexican counterparts from Nuevo León and Tamaulipas, covering all areas of district operations. Additionally, district staff members have traveled to Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, to meet with officials from the Secretaría de Desarrollo Industrial, Comercial y Turístico (SEDICOT-Ministry of Industrial, Commercial and Tourist Development) to continue with binational technology exchange and coordination of projects along the Texas-Mexico border.

The district coordinated the process of evaluating the feasibility of rehabilitating and preserving the historic Roma Suspension Bridge with the SEDICOT and the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT- Secretary of Communications and Transportation).

The Pharr District has elaborated a district-wide BTEP plan stressing exchange opportunities resulting from the entity's daily activities. As a direct result of this plan, the district has participated in several technology exchange workshops with Mexican border states on Value Engineering, Asphaltic Concrete Design, Bridge Scour and many other topics. With support from the Design Division and the Laredo and El Paso district engineers, the Pharr district engineers took the lead role in border-wide efforts. A Value Engineering workshop took place in Ciudad Victoria with the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL – Ministry of Social

Development) to study ongoing construction and design efforts to develop a corridor through the Sierra Madre Mountains which would meet today's standards. The corridor is foreseen as an integral part of an international NAFTA corridor that will eventually connect to the proposed IH-69. This Value Engineering study resulted in substantial project improvement and achieved significant savings in construction time and funds. The Pharr District continues to coordinate with IRO and DES to provide additional value engineering training courses to the Mexican states through the BTEP. The district provided an engineer to assist in instructing on a nationwide teleconference (in Chihuahua) on Value Engineering via satellite. The teleconference was received simultaneously in all state SCT centers in Mexico.

In February 2002, the district held a SuperPave Showcase at the district office that included 16 engineers from various Mexican agencies. The sessions included presentations on the design and construction techniques, utilized a project visit in which the participants observed the material in the field, and a tour of the district laboratory.

The district also participated in the October 2002, meeting of the Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM) in Brownsville, Texas. The BLM is an organization co-chaired by the Mexican Consuls in McAllen and Brownsville and the U.S. Consul in Matamoros. The organization, which is comprised of governmental entities from both sides of the border, meets approximately every four months to hear concerns regarding the border region.

Construction (CST)

The Construction Division hosts a number of international visitors from the public and private sectors interested in materials and construction matters, pavement design, pavement management, pavement data equipment development and accelerated pavement testing. The Construction Division further supplements technology exchange by providing these visitors with information on research and design criteria and processes.

Construction Division personnel provide important technical support to NAFTA's Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee Working Group 2 on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions.

Design (DES)

Design Division personnel have participated in design criteria presentations for Mexican transportation officials. Some of these presentations were made in cooperation with transportation research centers such as the Center for Transportation Research (CTR) and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI).

This division also provides staff support to the Border Technology Exchange Program. Especially noteworthy in this respect is the division's border-wide effort to bring together TxDOT and Mexican engineers to improve binational roads and bridges through Value Engineering.

Environmental Affairs (ENV)

The Environmental Affairs Division participates in the following activities:

- Special study requirements for archaeological investigations where foreign laboratories must be used.
- Cooperation and exchange of information between archaeological laboratories.
- Excavation of archaeological sites of international importance.
- Continued work toward restoration of the historic International Roma Suspension Bridge, a joint project of the TxDOT/FHWA Enhancement Program and the government of Mexico. This year, however, due to lack of monies, this project is on a hold status.

Motor Carrier (MCD)

The Motor Carrier Division along with the Traffic Operations Division (TRF) managed the development of the Texas Intelligent Transportation System/Commercial Vehicle Operations (ITS/CVO) Business Plan, which was completed in January 2001. The division managed the development of the plan through a multi-discipline steering committee, which included other divisions, state and federal agencies, and industry associations. Although the ITS/CVO Business Plan is a statewide plan, it encompasses activities that will be beneficial to cross-border traffic. MCD staff members continue to be involved in the plan's implementation.

Division staff members participate in informational seminars and transportation fairs related to cross border trucking, briefings for international visitors, and NAFTA-related issues as needed. In addition, MCD is a voting member of the Western Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (WASHTO) Committee on Highway Transport. The mission of this committee is to promote uniform laws, regulations, and practices among member jurisdictions and other jurisdictions for the efficient movement of goods and services, while ensuring the safety of all highway users and preserving the highway infrastructure. This also includes Canadian and Mexican truck uniformity issues. The committee meets twice a year.

MCD administers administrative rules for commercial motor carrier registration and insurance requirements under Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 643, and single state registration under the Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 645, which applies to international motor carriers operating in Texas. MCD provides public assistance (including assistance in Spanish), conducts field audits, and administers complaint resolutions with regard to motor carriers operating in Texas. The administration of these responsibilities by MCD affects international motor carriers operating in Texas.

MCD is also responsible for administering Texas' oversize/overweight permit program under the Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 623. These requirements impact Mexican-based carriers that transport oversized or overweight loads into Texas.

In addition, the division has a web site that includes a Mexican-based Commercial Motor Carriers Vehicle Checklist and a link to the department's *International Motor Carriers Frequently Asked Questions* list. The web site address is <http://www.dot.state.tx.us>. Select "Trucking and Vehicle Storage Facilities."

Research and Technology Implementation (RTI)

The Research and Technology Implementation Office administers the federal Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP). TxDOT contracts with the Texas A&M University System's Engineering Extension Service for the program. LTAP program administrators have met with counterparts in Mexico to advise and coordinate activities. Additionally, international requests for research reports are received and filled. Contact information for obtaining research reports can be found on the TxDOT website at <http://www.dot.state.tx.us> by going to "About TxDOT" and selecting Research and Technology Implementation on the functional organizational chart.

Traffic Operations (TRF)

The Traffic Operations Division is involved in a number of international activities including:

- Participation in various groups, organizations and committees with substantial international memberships such as AASHTO, the Intelligent Transportation Society of America, the Transportation Research Board, and the Institute of Transportation Engineers.
- Development of Intelligent Transportation Systems related deployment and planning projects in El Paso, Del Rio, Laredo, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
- Research and deployment of various signage initiatives for the Texas-Mexico border region including warning signs and bilingual signs.

Transportation Planning and Programming (TPP)

TPP has the lead responsibility for the state international bridge application process as enacted by the 74th Texas Legislature in 1995 (Senate Bill 1633), which requires a political subdivision or private entity to "obtain approval from the Texas Transportation Commission for the construction of the bridge before requesting approval from the federal government." Factors to be regarded by the commission when considering approval include:

- The facility's potential impacts on the economy of the region, the environment, traffic congestion and free trade.
- Whether the bridge construction is consistent with the state's transportation plan.
- Whether the future transportation infrastructure on both sides of the border, at the time the bridge becomes operational, will be of sufficient capacity to support the new structure.
- Whether the revenue generated by the bridge will be sufficient to finance the planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of the bridge.

- Whether there is support on the Mexican side for the necessary transportation infrastructure.

In making its determination, the commission consults with the following agencies/offices:

- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Texas Historical Commission
- Texas Department of Agriculture
- Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
- Texas Department of Economic Development
- Texas General Land Office

TPP participates as TxDOT's representative for the Latin American Trade and Transportation study (LATTS). LATTS is supported by 14 states and Puerto Rico. The purpose is to evaluate opportunities for trade with Latin America, and to determine transportation infrastructure investment needs for the Alliance to capitalize on such trade.

TPP supports the Border Trade Advisory Committee, a legislatively mandated committee that is to advise the commission on strategies for border trade and transportation issues.

Travel (TRV)

The Travel Division is involved in international communications and activities by virtue of the travel and litter prevention information and literature it publishes and distributes.

Travel literature is mailed throughout the world to people who request it. During the 2002 calendar year, approximately 31,971 packets were mailed to international destinations. Of these packets 15,441 were mailed to Canada, 2,347 to Germany, 2,154 to Romania, 1,960 to Mexico, 1,855 to the Netherlands, 1,751 to Great Britain and 1,686 to Russia and the remainder to a variety of countries.

The division publishes monthly editions of *Texas Highways*, the official travel magazine of Texas. The publication encourages recreational travel to and within the state and tells Texas stories to readers around the world. Currently, the magazine has subscribers from 84 countries. *Texas Highways* magazine is not only mailed throughout the world but can also be found at the website address <http://www.texashighways.com>.

Through *Texas Highways*, TxDOT has been an active member of the International Regional Magazine Association (IRMA) since 1977. IRMA membership consists of regional magazines similar to *Texas Highways* from all over the United States, Ireland, Canada, Bermuda and other countries.

Another useful website for Texas travel information is <http://www.traveltex.com>. An interactive map allows viewers to select from among the seven Texas regions to access information from the *Texas State Travel Guide*, the *Texas Events Calendar* and the *Texas Public Campground Guide*, as well as other sources.

TxDOT's litter prevention programs, which are managed by the TRV division, have received international attention. People from around the world send e-mail inquiring about the department's famous "Don't Mess with Texas" public awareness campaign and the "Adopt-a-Highway" program, which allows companies and organizations to participate in removing litter from the state's highways. Since the introduction of the programs in the 1980s, visitors from the United Kingdom, Japan, Mexico and Switzerland have come to Austin to learn more about litter prevention and the possibility of starting similar programs in their countries. The Travel Division began a website in 1998 to provide information about TxDOT's popular litter prevention programs. Information on these programs can be found at <http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org>. The division also produced a new Spanish-language Don't Mess with Texas public service announcement in 2002 and continued placing it for broadcast during 2003.

In December 1998, the Travel Division hosted the second International Adopt-a-Highway Conference in San Antonio. Participants included representatives from 22 U.S. states including Washington D.C., and the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas that were sponsored by the Border Technology Exchange Program. In addition, TRV is actively involved in the International Adopt-a-Highway organization and participates in online correspondence with members throughout the United States and several other countries.

Vehicle Titles and Registration (VTR)

Personnel from the VTR are actively involved in border affairs. VTR Regional Managers located along the border frequently meet with local and state law enforcement and U.S. Custom's officials on current border issues. Division staff members serve on various committees and meet regularly with representatives from government entities and private enterprises. VTR's Director is a member of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Committee coordinated by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), and the International Registration Plan, Inc. (IRP). The group meets twice a year and is made up of AAMVA representatives and motor vehicle administrators from the U.S. and Mexican border states. A NAFTA Border State working group meeting was also held in Phoenix, Arizona on December, 2002.

The Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA), which is a part of VTR, is actively involved in efforts to reduce the number of vehicles that are stolen and transported across both sides of the border. A more detailed description of the ATPA can be found on pages 21-22 of

this report.

Texas statutes further define the roles that the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and VTR play in foreign affairs. A portion of the statute regulates foreign commercial motor vehicle involvement in commercial motor transportation in Texas. Chapter 648 of the Transportation Code, addresses Foreign Commercial Motor Transportation, and defines a "commercial motor vehicle" to include a foreign commercial motor vehicle, and defines "motor carrier" to include a foreign motor carrier.

The operating boundaries for foreign commercial vehicles are currently limited to cities located along the contiguous border with Mexico. The border commercial zones for the United States/Mexico ports of entry in Texas are based on the number of miles from the city limit boundaries, depending on the population of the city. The four-county area of Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy counties is considered one zone and cities located in this zone are not restricted by mileage or population. The boundaries of a border commercial zone may be modified or established only as provided by federal law. In anticipation of the USDOT lifting the moratorium on cross-border traffic, the Texas Legislature in 1995 provided several registration options for Mexican commercial carriers.

Detailed information on NAFTA, registration requirements, forms and frequently asked questions is available from the TxDOT web site <http://www.dot.state.tx.us> under the link "Automobiles." The application for the NAFTA Annual Permit (VTR-29 NAFTA) is also available on the Internet and can be accessed the same way. VTR also has provided a revised NAFTA booklet (in English with Spanish translations) entitled *General Information on NAFTA and Cross Border Traffic*, which includes forms and instructions from VTR and the Motor Carrier Division.

All VTR forms are currently under review to identify which should be provided in Spanish. Specifically, the Operations Branch has been tasked to prepare a notification advising the counties of the top 10 most requested VTR forms and to determine which forms are currently available in Spanish. The Operations Branch is also responsible for ensuring that all Spanish forms are posted on the VTR Web site and fax-on-demand. The following is an updated list of VTR forms and publications that are currently available in Spanish:

- Form VTR-29, Texas NAFTA Annual Permit Application
- Form VTR-901, Buyer's Certification of Export-Only Sale
- Form VTR-901-A, Annual Buyer's Certification of Export-Only Sale
- Form VTR-930-1, Certification of Texas Title
- Form VTR-930-2, Certification of Title in Process
- Book 81, General Information on NAFTA and Cross Border Traffic
- Summary of Informal Paired City Agreements with the Mexican States of Coahuila and Chihuahua and the Bilateral Understanding with the Mexican State of Tamaulipas.

The IRP/International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA) Border State meeting was held in Chandler,

Arizona on February 11, 2003, to identify issues border states will need to review to accommodate Mexican carriers. A working group of the four border states was hosted by the National Governors' Association (NGA) in coordination with USDOT (FHWA). Attendees included representatives from California, Arizona, IRP, Inc., FHWA, IFTA, Inc. and the State Comptroller.

The purpose was to explore the concerns and impact on the border states when the border is opened, and how to mitigate them. Some of the issues mentioned were the lifting of the moratorium and a U.S.-Mexico MOU on safety issues. Based on concerns of the states, a proposal was made to set up a satellite office in Mexico, funded by the Mexican and U.S. governments, to do registrations and collect funds. The border states would have representatives supervising the IRP and IFTA processes. There are still areas of concern such as cost, equity of burden, audit, communication/language, commitment, enforcement/compliance, and currency conversion that would have to be resolved before the proposal moves forward. Two issues that overshadow progress in this area are the authority of the jurisdictions and the cost. Legal issues are also a concern including the Mexican constitutional issues with regard to Mexico joining the Plan, and the issues and requirements for U.S. carriers going into Mexico.

VTR works closely with the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB) and State Farm Insurance to educate and train members on the changes dealing with the salvage vehicle industry, with the recovery of stolen vehicles from Mexico and the process to return the vehicles back to the United States. Seminars were given by:

- State Farm Insurance Company on March 19, 2003
- NICB on September 23, 2003.

On April 4, 2003, VTR attended a meeting with local transportation officials, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), DPS, New Mexico Border Authority and Juarez Motor Carriers to discuss problems and solutions on cross border traffic affecting our commercial zone.

VTR representatives attended the Border Solutions Subcommittee Meeting with ATPA to discuss issues dealing with VTR policy and procedures that can assist in preventing and lessening the importation of stolen vehicles into the state. The Border Solutions Subcommittee meetings were held in Corpus Christi, Texas in April 2003, and Brownsville, Texas, in November, 2003.

VTR also takes an active role in educating and training DPS License and Weight Troopers on the valid requirements and credentials needed from foreign motor carriers. Classes on registration have been given locally and are updated as changes occur. The last class was conducted in May, 2003.

A meeting with the NAFTA Trilateral Insurance Working Group was held on October 30, 2003, in Austin, Texas, to continue discussions on solutions for insuring Mexican cross-border motor

transport in the USA and Canada. Attendees included delegates from the Mexican Government, Canadian Government, representatives from TxDOT, The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI), USDOT, the insurance industry and the trucking industry. The purpose of the meeting was to address immediate concerns of the Mexican transportation industry with regard to the availability and affordability of insurance for purposes of compliance with U.S. and Texas financial responsibilities and requirements for transport in the U.S. Additionally a purpose was to seek out short and long term solutions. The NAFTA Trilateral Working Group's goal is to develop a cost effective way of providing insurance for motor carriers instead of having to obtain insurance from all three countries. The working group plans to continue meeting to discuss the progress of these issues.

Weekly, the VTR, attends a U. S. Customs meeting to educate Mexican motor carriers on current regulatory requirements. Specifically the meetings involve issues on commercial vehicle registration, NAFTA restrictions, regulatory permits under the MCD and clarify, when required, any apprehended and/or enforcement policies enacted and enforced by DPS.

With the absence of a local TxDOT Motor Carrier Division office in El Paso, Texas, foreign carriers request assistance and guidance from the VTR Regional Office. VTR representatives satisfy many of their vehicle registration needs and educate them on the proper permits needed. VTR staff also maintains communication with the Secretaria de Comercio Transportes (SCT) in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Information discussed concerns valid Mexican registration, authority and policy changes. Mexico has provided the VTR Regional Office in El Paso with the most current and valid SCT license plate, hologram and registration receipts being issued to a legal foreign commercial vehicles.

The El Paso VTR Regional Office plans to conduct a class for the El Paso Auto Theft Task Force and the Attorney General of the State of Chihuahua. Topics to be covered include the Texas security features on title documents and the five security locks in place to prevent the issuance of a negotiable title to a stolen vehicle. In addition, a Border Partnership Working Group meeting took place in December 2003, in Austin, Texas. The purpose of this entity is to improve overall levels of communication among key border interested agencies and stakeholders. Attendees included representatives from TxDOT, DPS, FMCSA and The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI).

SECTION II

COMMITTEES, CONFERENCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee (LTSS)

Description: The North American Free Trade Agreement established a Committee on Standards-Related Measures to help the United States, Canada and Mexico monitor and implement the agreement. Four subcommittees, including the Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee, were established to address specific issues.

Trilateral Working Groups were established to concentrate on specific issues. Additionally, Transportation Consultative Group (TCG) Working Groups were established to address non-standards issues that affect cross border movements among the three countries. They operate in conjunction with the LTSS, but these groups were not specified in NAFTA and are not officially a part of the LTSS. The groups' configuration has changed as they have completed their stated missions. Still functioning are:

- LTSS Working Group 1: Driver and Vehicle Standards and Supervision of Motor Carrier Compliance (will be merged with TCG Group 1)
- LTSS Working Group 2: Vehicle Weights and Dimensions
- LTSS Working Group 5: Hazardous Materials Standards

- TCG Working Group 1: Cross Border Operations and Facilitation (composed of TCGs 1 and 2)
- TCG Working Group 2: Rail Standards
- TCG Working Group 3: Automated Data Exchange
- TCG Working Group 4: Science and Technology
- TCG Working Group 5: Maritime and Port Policy

Participants: This trilateral subcommittee is composed of representatives from the United States, Canada and Mexico. The IRO Director, who coordinates closely with the Texas Governor's Office, the Secretary of State's Office and TxDOT administration, has represented the state of Texas on the committee. The DES division provides technical support for Working Group 2. MCD and VTR also provide significant support for the working groups.

Purpose: To develop recommendations for harmonization of standards for bus, rail and truck operations and transportation of hazardous materials among Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Initiatives: The LTSS established working groups pursuant to Article 913 of NAFTA. The LTSS and TCG working groups meet as often as necessary to accomplish NAFTA goals.

Some of the LTSS's accomplishments this year have been:

- Creation of a side by side comparison of vehicle weight and dimension limits for the United States, Mexico and Canada.

- Drafting safety performance criteria for carriers.
- The inauguration of a motor carrier safety data exchange program.

Previous years accomplishments include:

- The signature of a United States-Mexico MOU regarding commercial driver programs.
- The publication of an updated North American Emergency Response Guide regarding hazardous materials in English, Spanish and French.
- The signature of a United States-Mexico Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on drug and alcohol testing for motor vehicle drivers.
- The adoption of a uniform minimum age for commercial vehicle drivers.
- The recognition of several binational agreements as the basis for achieving reciprocity of driver medical standards.
- The promotion of trilateral communication among insurance regulators to discuss issues related to insurance coverage for motor carriers engaged in cross-border operations.
- The completion of a 1998 U.S.-Canada bilateral report on railroad operating practices.
- Mexican federal law enforcement official training in Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) inspection standards.
- An agreement to develop a North American model rule and standards document related to the transport of hazardous materials.
- A commitment to the development of common format and contents for a North American log book for recording drivers' hours-of-service.
- A workshop on public/private partnerships for financing.
- An agreement on a common language requirement for drivers.
- An analysis and comparison of traffic signage in the three countries.
- An analysis of regulations affecting rail safety in the three countries.
- A five-year plan for increased cooperation in the field of North American transportation technologies.
- The trilateral information exchange on emissions testing developments.
- Extensive outreach activities to educate commercial drivers (both truckers and bus operators) about cross border regulations.

Meetings: The LTSS met for the first time in Mexico on July 11-12, 1994. The group meets once a year in a plenary session. The last plenary session was held in San Antonio, Texas on May 28-29, 2003. The LTSS, TCG working groups and associated technical panels meet periodically.

Benefits: This committee affords TxDOT the opportunity to closely monitor and provide input to the negotiations among the three NAFTA nations, as they discuss the compatibility of transportation standards. Significant efforts have been put forth to reduce barriers to Mexican carriers being allowed to operate within the United States.

Automobile Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA)

Description: The authority was created in 1991 by the Texas Legislature. The Authority distributes funds through a grant process, and eligible organizations and agencies make applications for funding to the Authority. Funds are awarded for projects to create a statewide effort for the reduction of vehicle theft.

Participants: The Authority's board of directors consists of six governor-appointed individuals (two representing each of the following: law enforcement, consumers, and insurance companies) plus the Executive Director of the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), who serves ex-officio. The Authority administers the ATPA fund and oversees the operation of the ATPA program. The ATPA Office Director and staff report to TxDOT's Director of the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division.

Purpose: To reduce motor vehicle theft statewide. Categories for projects that are eligible for funding include activities for enforcement/apprehension, prosecution/adjudication, public education, prevention of the sale of stolen auto parts, and reduction of stolen vehicles moved across the Mexican border.

Initiatives:

- The Authority established a binational Border Solutions Committee in August 1992 to identify problems and possible solutions to motor vehicle theft along the Texas-Mexico border. The committee members include representatives from federal, state and local governments on both sides of the border. The committee meets twice a year, alternating sites between Texas and Mexican border cities.
- A statewide "Help End Auto Theft" (H.E.A.T.) registration program is part of the enabling legislation. The program began in November 1993, and currently, vehicles registered for the years 2000-2004 number 45,271. The DPS administers the program, and all cities and towns in the state may participate.
- The Border Auto Theft Information Center (BATIC) was established through ATPA funds in September 1993 to answer inquiries about stolen vehicles from authorized law enforcement agencies in the United States and Mexico. Through this program, an average of 1,400 stolen vehicles is recovered annually from Mexico. BATIC provides 24-hour service to U.S. and Mexican police who are seeking information on the status of stolen vehicles. For Fiscal year 2003, BATIC handled 119,583 inquiries from the U.S., Mexico and Central America. Of those inquiries, 3,983 were "hits" or stolen vehicles, and 2,028 vehicles, with a value of \$26,527,071 were recovered and returned to the U.S.
- An Insurance Fraud Committee was established in 1996 to address the problem of automobile insurance fraud. The committee addresses problems of fraud and seeks potential solutions within Texas and internationally.

- The Grantee Advisory Committee considers matters of concern and interest to both grantees and ATPA. This committee is evidence that the ATPA board values the opinions of the grantees. This committee is very much a part of the ATPA future.
- DPS conducts training on motor vehicle theft for U.S. and Mexican law enforcement personnel. It provides training to tax assessors/collectors, registration clerks and law enforcement officers in the detection of counterfeit documents used in the title process and registration of stolen vehicles in Texas. Funding is provided by ATPA.

Meetings: The ATPA Board meets four times a year, unless there is a need for additional meetings. The meetings are usually held in Austin.

Benefits: The Authority represents an effective forum for overseeing the operation of an anti-theft program and administration of funding to reduce vehicle theft in Texas. The motor vehicle theft rate (number of stolen vehicles per 100,000 registered vehicles) has been reduced by over 51% since 1991. Many initiatives have helped foster improved communications and cooperation in this effort.

Joint Working Committee (JWC)

Description: This Committee was created by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on April 29, 1994, by U.S. Transportation Secretary Federico Peña and Mexican Transportation Secretary Emilio Gamboa. The JWC oversaw the funding, logistics, and research of a border wide binational study, which was completed in 1998. A new MOU was signed in 2000 to continue the work of the Committee.

Participants: The JWC members include:

- Four representatives from the Ministry of Communications and Transportation (Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes-SCT) and four from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
 - The senior person of these groups is the chief of delegation for the respective U.S. and Mexico delegations.
 - One member from each of these delegations is a border-wide coordinator for the respective delegation.
- A chief delegate and a co-delegate as required represent each U.S. and Mexican border state.
 - TxDOT's Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations and IRO Director are the Texas delegates.
- One representative from the U.S. State Department and the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE - Ministry of Foreign Relations) respectively.

Purpose: The JWC serves as a forum for the coordination of border transportation planning and programming activities along the Texas-Mexico border. The JWC is also used as a medium for discussing other binational border area transportation issues.

Goals: The JWC Memo of Understanding for 2000 cites the following goals:

- Maintain frequent and effective communication among the parties and their respective border states from both countries concerning transportation planning.
- Closely coordinate between the entities involved in the US-Mexico Joint Working Committee to support the planning processes at the federal, state, regional, and local levels.
- Coordinate with the U.S.-Mexico Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group and other federal and state organizations involved in activities related to border crossings.
- Stimulate and promote the application of innovative methods to improve the safe, efficient, and economical cross border movement of people and goods.
- Pursue additional goals as agreed upon by the participants.

Initiatives: The Memo of Understanding for 2000 included the nine lines of work listed below:

- Border Infrastructure Needs Assessment
- Geographic Information System /Live Data Bank
- Transborder Corridor Planning
- Coordination System for the Operation of Border Ports of Entry
- Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Innovative Financing Mechanisms for Border Related Improvements
- Border Technology Exchange Program
- Air Quality
- Intermodal Transportation

The 2003 – 2005 JWC Work Plan includes the following projects:

- Port of Entry Coordination Pilot
- Intelligent Transportation Systems at Otay Mesa
- Innovative Financing Mechanisms
- Geographic Information Systems
- Identification of Bottlenecks at the Border

Meetings: The JWC met for the first time on August 1-2, 1994, in San Antonio, Texas. The JWC meets twice a year on an as needed basis.

Benefits: The JWC is the only U.S.-Mexico border-wide planning work group.

United States-Mexico Binational Bridges and Border Crossings Group

Description: There are a total of 23 vehicular bridges connecting Texas to Mexico, which share 1,254.7 miles of common border. Hence this group focuses on proposed international bridges and border crossings, the status/needs of current border crossing facilities and transportation access.

Participants: Formed in 1981, the group is composed of delegations from the governments of the United States and Mexico. The U.S. Department of State's Coordinator for U.S.-Mexico Border Affairs chairs the U.S. delegation, while Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores' (SRE) Director General for North American Affairs chairs the Mexican delegation. U.S. and Mexico border state representatives have been included in the sessions since 1994. The Assistant Executive Director for Engineering Operations and the IRO represent TxDOT on the group.

Purpose: To discuss proposed bridges and border crossings and their related infrastructure and to exchange technical information so that those projects, which both federal governments deem beneficial, may complete the approval process of the two respective governments. Related issues such as toll roads and other infrastructure projects are discussed, as well as operational matters involving existing and future crossings.

Meetings: The group meets twice yearly. Meetings include participation of the U.S. and Mexican delegations composed of representatives from federal agencies that have an interest in/or responsibility for bilateral relations and permitting of new crossings (international ports of entry). Issues discussed include:

- Inspections
- Highway/rail access
- Construction of facilities
- Environment
- Monitoring of the international boundary
- Border Security Facilities

The meetings include a U.S.-only and a Mexico-only meeting followed by three binational sessions over a three-day period. During the public sessions advocates of proposed bridges and border crossings (and related infrastructure projects) make presentations. These interactive sessions, in which the U.S. and Mexican delegations can query the presenters. During the technical sessions, the delegations meet to discuss specific border crossings and exchange views and technical information. Reports of binational committees' activities and major programs that directly impact the U.S. - Mexico border area are made. Each U.S. and Mexican border state representative offers a presentation on the development of current transportation infrastructure projects. The final session is a plenary at which positions are summarized by the two delegations. In addition, the group conducts periodic "border walks", alternating between the U.S. and Mexico.

Benefits: This group allows state participation in all sessions of the U.S. delegation, the value of which is twofold. First, state DOT representatives can provide input that FHWA delegation

members cannot. Such project-specific information should be considered in advancing proposed bridge and crossing projects through approval processes. In addition, the information that state DOTs glean from the closed technical session assists those agencies in transportation infrastructure development planning. Texas plays a key role in this forum as it is the only border state that requires a state international crossings permit prior to a U.S. Presidential Permit being signed.

Working groups were formed for the first time during the October 2002 session, in response to the section of the U.S.-Mexico 22-Point Partnership Plan dealing with infrastructure. The four working groups (Long-term Planning, Harmonization of Procedures for Approving Border Crossings, Relief of Bottlenecks and Financing of Ports) develop recommendations to be submitted to the Binational Committee for consideration.

Note: Details regarding the crossings are available in the TxDOT publication *Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings: Existing and Proposed*, available from the International Relations Office or on the web at www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/.

Border Governors' Conference

Description: Governors of the ten U.S.-Mexican border states meet once a year to discuss topics of mutual interest and concern. The work groups include: Agriculture, Border Crossing, Economic Development, Education, Environment, Energy, Health, Tourism, North American Development Bank, Water for Sustainable Development and Border Security. The members of various work tables meet during the year to develop recommendations and follow up on action plans. From this input, a joint declaration is developed and delivered to federal and state governmental entities and presidents of both countries.

Participants: Includes representatives from each of the border governors' offices, and state delegates for each of the work tables. Federal government representatives are invited as observers. New Mexico and Baja California are 2004-2006 co-chairs on the Border Crossings work table. TxDOT's IRO Director coordinates department input as requested on border transportation issues.

Purpose: To provide a forum which enables the ten border governors to develop personal relationships; to identify and address issues and opportunities of the border region; and to promote initiatives for improving the quality of life of the people in the region.

Some objectives of the conference are:

- 1) To foment and strengthen personal relations among the ten border governors.
- 2) To promote unified action along the U.S.-Mexico border and on national issues.
- 3) To address border problems and opportunities.
- 4) To jointly promote development throughout the border region.

Meetings: The conference is held annually. The Border Crossings Worktable, in which TxDOT participates, and other worktables meet between conferences to develop recommendations to be included in the joint communiqué the governors sign at the annual conference, as well as to follow up on recommendations from previous communiqués.

Benefits: This forum provides TxDOT with an opportunity to work closely with the Governor's Office and the Secretary of State's Office in establishing coordinated positions on transportation border issues. The conference also promotes coordination with neighboring states in making recommendations regarding the border area.

Motor Carrier NAFTA Task Force

Description: The Motor Carrier NAFTA task force operates under the aegis of the Base State Working Group as provided for under Title IV, Motor Carrier Act, Section 4008, Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991.

Participants: The task force consists of representatives from Arizona, California, Maine, Montana, New Mexico, Texas and Utah. There are also representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, the National Conference on State Legislatures, the International Registration Plan, HELP, Inc., the American Trucking Associations, the National Governors' Association and the International Fuel Tax Agreement. The Director of TxDOT's Vehicle Titles and Registration Division represents Texas on the task force.

Purpose: According to Section 4008 of ISTEA, the task force was established for the purpose of: "Proposing procedures for resolving disputes among states participating in the International Registration Plan and among states participating in the International Fuel Tax Agreement, including designation of the Department of Transportation, or any other person for resolving such disputes;" and, "Providing technical assistance to states participating or seeking to participate in the plan or in the agreement."

Meetings: Once a year

Benefits: This task force is an effective forum for addressing the fundamental differences in motor carrier operations among U.S. and Mexican states and Canadian provinces.

At the current time, a three step approach is being considered to enable Mexico to participate in the IRP program: 1) use of permits, 2) intermediate step to have the four border states (Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas) serve as base jurisdictions for Mexican carriers, and 3) Mexico joining the IRP and IFTA Agreements.

Secretary of State's Border Advisory Roundtable

Description: The Secretary of State is designated as the chief liaison to Mexico and the border region of Texas. The Texas Border and Mexican Affairs Division of the Secretary of State's Office established a State Agency Advisory Roundtable on Border/Mexican Affairs ("Advisory Roundtable") for the purpose of identifying common inter-agency border concerns

Participants: Representatives from 26 different state agencies that have dealings with the border area and/or Mexico.

Purpose:

The Roundtable's common purpose is to:

- a. Establish an ongoing dialogue relating to news and information of border and cross-border affairs.
- b. Discuss, focus and monitor major issues and concerns.
- c. Identify interagency coordination and collaboration activities to facilitate common policy and project objectives.
- d. Develop a profile of border and cross-border activities, initiatives and policies.

Meetings: The Advisory Roundtable meets on a quarterly basis. The meeting is usually held from 10 a.m. to noon at the Rudder Building across from the Capitol.

Benefits: The Advisory Roundtable has served to keep the agencies advised of the initiatives and programs of all of the other agencies relating to Mexico and the border. In addition, it organized a series of high-quality short courses designed to address the challenges of the border area and significantly improve the State's ability to work with our Mexican counterparts and achieve positive results that benefit our respective countries. These short courses are open to all state employees.

SECTION III PUBLICATIONS

In addition to the *International Activities Report*, the following TxDOT publications deal with TxDOT's international endeavors.

Texas-Mexico International Bridges and Border Crossings: Existing and Proposed

(International Relations Office) This report, which is updated annually, is a comprehensive guide to all of the existing and proposed border crossings connecting Texas and the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila and Chihuahua. The report gives descriptive information such as maps of the area, planned improvements with estimated costs, connecting roadway and general traffic information for each bridge. For the proposed bridges, information is given regarding the costs of bridges and supporting facilities, as well as permit status. The 2003 edition of the report, also available in Spanish, can be found on the Web at: www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/

Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee (LTSS) Quarterly Report

(International Relations Office) In 1995, the Texas Legislature passed a bill requiring TxDOT to publish this report for the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Attorney General's office. It provides a summary of activities related to the LTSS and its associated groups over the relevant three-month period. The report is available on the Web at www.dot.state.tx.us/iro/

Oversize, Overweight Permit Rule Booklet

(Motor Carrier Division) This publication provides administrative rules adopted under 43 TAC, Chapter 28 to implement provisions of Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 623. This publication includes information regarding the process for obtaining oversize and overweight permits.

Motor Carrier Rules Booklet

(Motor Carrier Division) This publication provides administrative rules adopted under 43 TAC, Chapter 18 to implement provisions of Texas Transportation Code, Chapters 643 and 645. This publication includes information regarding motor carrier registration and insurance requirements, including requirements for Mexico-based carriers.

Motor Carrier Handbook

(Motor Carrier Division) This publication provides information for motor carriers operating in Texas, including Mexico-based carriers. The Handbook includes practical information needed to meet Texas' motor carrier registration, insurance, size and weight, and oversize/overweight permit requirements.

Truck Tips Brochure

(Motor Carrier Division) This brochure outlines basic requirements for operating as a motor carrier in Texas, and includes a comprehensive list of state agencies whose requirements apply to motor carriers.

General Information on NAFTA and Cross Border Traffic

(Vehicle Titles and Registration Division and Motor Carrier Division) This publication provides general information and responds to frequently asked questions (FAQs) on NAFTA and the international movement of commercial motor vehicles. The publication includes sections on the NAFTA Annual Permit complete with the application (the permit application is available in English and Spanish); general information on the 72 and 144-Hour Permits; International Motor Carrier information; Motor Carrier Division applications; Oversize/Overweight Permits (available in English and Spanish); additional telephone numbers and addresses for VTR Regional offices and the Border County Tax Offices (in English Only); and the MCD One-Stop-Shop Telephone Menu. The general information and FAQs are available on the Internet at www.dot.state.tx.us by selecting “Automobiles”. This publication was revised on September, 2003 and is now available in English and Spanish.